

# PRESS RELEASE

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## James H. Roussel, 1939 – 2018

February 02, 2018

**Baker Donelson is deeply saddened to announce the passing of senior counsel James H. Roussel. Mr. Roussel died at the age of 78 on Thursday, February 1, 2018.**

A native and lifelong resident of New Orleans, Louisiana, Mr. Roussel graduated from Tulane University School of Law in 1964, beginning a more than 50-year legal career in which he established himself as among the preeminent maritime lawyers in the country and around the globe. Mr. Roussel's practices spanned every conceivable facet of maritime law and the marine industry, including inland/brown water, offshore, and oceangoing bluewater matters involving marine insurance, collision/casualty work, regulatory and contract concerns, and commercial transactions.

Over the course of his career, he handled numerous significant matters internationally that ranged from a case involving a vessel that struck a mine in the Suez Canal to litigation involving a groundbreaking international maritime law issue in the Marshall Islands. He was also involved in the first class actions tried in Louisiana and taken to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Whether he was litigating cases in Egypt or New Orleans, Mr. Roussel demonstrated a legal acumen that earned him the respect of his colleagues and a reputation as the "Dean of the Admiralty Bar."

Mr. Roussel's skill and experience were recognized with numerous prestigious honors, such as inclusion in *The International Who's Who of Shipping and Maritime Lawyers*, *Chambers USA*, and *The Best Lawyers in America*, which named him the *Best Lawyers' 2012 New Orleans Admiralty & Maritime Law "Lawyer of the Year"* and the *Best Lawyers' 2016 New Orleans Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions - Defendants "Lawyer of the Year"*. Since 2007, he had been listed in *Louisiana Super Lawyers*, where he was named among the top 50 attorneys in Louisiana (2007 – 2015), among the top 50 attorneys in New Orleans (2014 – 2015), and among the top 10 attorneys in Louisiana (2013).

Mr. Roussel was active in the New Orleans community throughout his lifetime, and was an advisory board member of the New Orleans World Trade Center, former president of the Louisiana Diabetes Association, and a member of numerous carnival organizations.

Mr. Roussel was a mentor to literally generations of his fellow lawyers, and was consulted just as often by senior shareholders on thorny questions of law and professionalism as he was by younger lawyers in the Firm. From the most complex issues of maritime or insurance law, to the most mundane questions of procedure, he was a walking and breathing encyclopedia of legal knowledge. But beyond all this, his most respected and beloved attribute, consistently mentioned by his colleagues as well as by the counsel he practiced against and judges he appeared before, was his profound humility and respect for every person he encountered. Mr. Roussel took everyone as he found them, and treated them with the same level of esteem regardless of the circumstances. If you asked him, he would tell you, tongue firmly planted in cheek, that he was "doing the Lord's work." He probably didn't realize that there was more truth in this statement than he intended. Mr. Roussel helped countless colleagues and coworkers – regardless of their rank or circumstances – in times of need, whether on health issues, family troubles, legal troubles or work issues. This aspect of his professional life went largely unnoticed, both because of the often private nature of his counseling, and because he would never seek any recognition.

"Jimmy was a superb trial lawyer, a model of professionalism, and enjoyed a national and international reputation," said Nancy Scott Degan, managing shareholder of Baker Donelson's New Orleans office. "But even more than that, he was a truly beloved member of the Baker Donelson family. His sense of humor and good nature were unparalleled, and he was a friend, mentor and father figure to many of us. He will be very sorely missed."